

## **OSU RESEARCH PROJECT WASTES VALUABLE FUNDS**

Monday, August 4, 2003  
EDITORIAL & COMMENT 06A

I respond to the July 8 Dispatch article "*OSU* takes funds from *Philip Morris*, not smoking foes." I had to reread the article to be sure I had read it correctly.

Ohio State University is taking funds from a tobacco company to study the effects of nicotine on zebra fish and turning down a grant to help conduct smoking-cessation programs in Ross and Vinton counties. What exactly are the researchers going to find out from this research? Could it possibly be that smoking is not good for one and can lead to heart disease, emphysema and cancer? Or the possibility that it isn't in the baby's best interest for a pregnant woman to light up?

Having worked in a hospital for 32 years and seen people die from smoking-related diseases, I find this heartless decision not to help people stop smoking immoral.

LINDA P. ORENCHUK

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## **TANGLED IN THE STRINGS**

***Ohio State shouldn't have had to choose between smoking-research grants***

Wednesday, July 9, 2003  
EDITORIAL & COMMENT 10A

The scientific-research funding conflict that recently cost Ohio State University a \$540,000 grant is an unfortunate case of blind decree over reasoned decision.

The university had a shot at two grants ultimately aimed at further eroding Americans' smoking habit: The Ohio Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Foundation offered \$540,000 to the College of Nursing to develop stop-smoking programs for two of Ohio's heaviest-smoking counties -- inarguably a great goal.

*Philip Morris*, giant of the tobacco industry and focus of much-deserved suspicion, offered \$590,000 to a doctor at the College of Medicine to study the effects of nicotine on the brain receptors of zebra fish, a species superbly suited for study because its embryos develop quickly and are easily observed.

Great potential news for those who would like to see smoking slowed in Ohio, right?

Well, it would be if *OSU* researchers could have grabbed both grants and gotten to work, as they most fervently wanted to do.

Unfortunately, the anti-tobacco foundation, set up with a \$1.2 billion endowment from Ohio's share of a landmark, multistate lawsuit against tobacco companies, would have given the grant to the College of Nursing only if the university promised not to accept any money from tobacco companies.

It seems the foundation, funded with tobacco money via the state government, won't do business with those who take tobacco money directly from the source.

University officials decided to decline the foundation grant and accept the *Philip Morris* grant, saying the foundation's tobacco-money ban would unacceptably restrict the freedom of other Ohio State scientists to pursue research funding.

The decision was correct, but the fact that it was necessary is unfortunate.

The suspicion that must underlie the foundation's decree is understandable; the tobacco industry has a long and shameful history of co-opting scientists at universities across the nation. For decades, some researchers willingly accepted grants that restricted the area of study so narrowly as to produce results that, while technically accurate, could be misused easily to minimize tobacco's dangers. Another tactic was to limit scientists' ability to publish findings that reflected badly on tobacco use.

But the particular grant offered to the College of Medicine is, according to insiders, remarkably free of such restrictions. Under its terms, the university will be free to publish its findings when and how it sees fit -- a key measure of academic freedom.

Perhaps *Philip Morris* sees a no-strings grant as a chance to burnish a smelly and tar-stained public image. The company's motivation, however, is irrelevant to the knowledge that can be gained by the research it funds.

So the foundation's ban on giving money to any institution "tainted" by tobacco money appears to be stifling Ohio State University's ability to study and battle nicotine addiction. Perhaps even more troubling is that the ban disregards the value of the basic research the College of Medicine wants to do -- bedrock science that is the essential foundation of life-improving discoveries.

The foundation appears to be trying to avoid such conflicts in the future by changing its bylaws. Instead of saying that it won't give money to any institution that accepts tobacco money, it will limit the restriction to a single department -- in other words, one department can receive foundation money even if someone in another department is working with tobacco money.

The change is an improvement but too late to salvage the university's chance to help develop stop-smoking programs in places where they are most needed.

The foundation should have been willing sooner to evaluate the terms of the tobacco-company offer and to consider the possibility that using some no-strings-attached *Philip Morris* guilt money to fight tobacco use is smarter than an unthinking, countereffective ban.

#### TOBACCO-MONEY DISPUTE

### OSU TAKES FUNDS FROM *PHILIP MORRIS*, NOT SMOKING FOES

Tuesday, July 8, 2003  
NEWS 01C

By Alayna DeMartini  
*THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH*

It's not often a university rejects a grant, especially if it's in the half-million-dollar range.

Ohio State University has done just that.

After a two-month tussle, the university accepted a \$590,000 grant from tobacco giant *Philip Morris* and rejected a \$540,000 grant from the state's tobacco-use prevention foundation.

The university had to choose because the foundation's policy has been to deny grants to colleges or organizations if they're receiving tobacco-company money at the same time.

If *OSU* had taken the three-year grant from the Ohio Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Foundation, all faculty members would have been barred from accepting research money from a tobacco manufacturer for three years.

"We have 3,200 faculty. Think about that. We just couldn't do that," said Thomas Rosol, interim vice president for university research.

This is the first time in at least 10 years *OSU* has accepted a research grant from a tobacco company, a university spokesman has said.

But in recent years, *OSU* has accepted donations totaling \$300,000 -- for such things as an art exhibit and financial aid -- from *Philip Morris* and other tobacco companies, said John Meyer, interim vice president for development.

By accepting the tobacco research grant, "we're not endorsing anyone," Rosol said. "We're not saying smoking is good or bad. We're just saying, 'Hey, we're glad *Philip Morris* wants to fund one of our scientists to do good work.'"

R. Thomas Boyd, an associate professor in *OSU's* College of Medicine, was offered the *Philip Morris* grant to study the effects of nicotine on the brain cells of zebra fish, whose embryonic development often is compared to that of humans.

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The grant that **OSU** turned down last week was to the College of Nursing to conduct a smoking-cessation program in Ross and Vinton counties.

Dr. Rob Crane, an associate professor in the College of Medicine and a trustee of the foundation, said he was "flabbergasted" by the university's decision.

"Our job in the College of Medicine is to heal people, to prevent illnesses, to treat cancer, heart disease and emphysema," Crane said. "Instead, we partner with the people whose major goal is to sell the No. 1 cause of all those illnesses."

The foundation's trustees are expected to decide at an Aug. 1 meeting what to do with the \$540,000 **OSU** turned down.

"We are disappointed in the university's decision to accept funding from Big Tobacco," said Michael J. Renner, the foundation's executive director. "Fortunately, there were other qualified agencies . . . who stand ready to deliver."

The **OSU** controversy prompted a change in the foundation's policy last month. In a 10-7 vote, the board said a university department could accept a foundation grant as long as that department -- not the entire university -- is not receiving tobacco-company money.

Crane, who voted against the change, said he plans to propose a vote on Aug. 1 to overturn that decision.

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## **OSU MUST TAKE SIDES IN TOBACCO DEBATE**

### ***Strings tied to grant for nicotine study fueling controversy***

Monday, June 16, 2003  
NEWS 01B

By Alayna DeMartini  
*THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH*

Tobacco giant **Philip Morris** is dangling a \$590,000 grant to study the effects of nicotine in front of Ohio State University. A state foundation is offering a \$540,000 grant for a smoking-cessation program.

The university can pick only one.

If **OSU** accepts the grant from the Ohio Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Foundation, it will have to turn down **Philip Morris'** because the foundation's policy has prohibited funding agencies that are receiving money from a tobacco company.

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The issue has plunged *OSU* into a grant tug of war.

On one side are defenders of academic freedom who say the university shouldn't accept a grant that limits what other faculty members study.

Opposing them are faculty members who think the university shouldn't accept money from tobacco companies.

"Frankly, who's more of a threat to the U.S.: Osama bin Laden or *Philip Morris*? Every year, we lose 400,000 Americans to smoking-related illnesses," said Dr. Rob Crane, an associate professor in *OSU's* medical school and a member of the state tobacco-prevention foundation's board of trustees.

President Karen Holbrook's administration is expected to announce a decision this week.

If the university opts for the *Philip Morris* grant, it will be the first time in at least a decade that the university has taken research money from a tobacco company, said *OSU* spokesman Earle Holland. The foundation donor records go back only 10 years, he said.

*OSU* ranks third nationally among public universities for research sponsored by private companies. Last year, the university took in \$426 million in private grants.

R. Thomas Boyd, an associate professor in *OSU's* College of Medicine who's being offered the *Philip Morris* grant, said the strings attached to the state grant aren't fair to the rest of the faculty.

"That's like Honda saying it's going to give you a grant to study something, but no one else (on the faculty) can get grants from Ford or General Motors," said Boyd, who added, "I'm not a tobacco fan."

The work he is proposing includes testing the effect of nicotine on the brain receptors of zebrafish, an animal whose embryonic development often is comparable to that of humans.

Future grants from the state tobacco-prevention foundation might be less controversial because its board of trustees recently agreed to loosen its rules.

In a 10-7 vote, the board decided to allow a university department to accept a foundation grant as long as that department -- not the entire university -- is not receiving tobacco-company money.

Foundation members who supported the policy change say they wouldn't want to prevent *OSU* or other universities from applying for future grants just because one department is doing research funded by tobacco companies.

The foundation is soliciting requests for proposals for another \$500,000 grant -- to research and help curb smokeless tobacco use in Ohio.

Two likely applicants, some foundation members say, are the state's only two dentistry schools: *OSU* and Case Western Reserve University. Case Western has been ruled out for a previous foundation grant because it was accepting grant money from a tobacco company.

Foundation president Michael J. Renner, executive director of the tobacco foundation, said the board's decision gives the foundation more options when it puts out a request for proposals.

"I certainly don't think it's a sellout," Renner said.

But not everyone on the foundation board is pleased with the move.

"I think it unfortunately encourages tobacco companies to invade the sanctity of academic science," Crane said. "There is a long history of tobacco companies perverting science to their own end."

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